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Annex No. 3

The External Evaluation Report of a Doctoral Study Domain

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I. Introduction¹

1. The context in which this external evaluation report was drafted:

The present report was made as part of the regular external evaluation required after the conditional accreditation of the DSUD Theology at "Ovidius" University of Constanta, from 26-28 June 2023.

The composition of the expert evaluation commission was as follows:

- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Tauwinkl (University of Bucharest), coordinator;
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andrian Aleksandrov (Sofia University), international expert;
- PhD student Bogdan-Marius Negrea (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj).

DSUD Theology at "Ovidius" University of Constanta was evaluated by ARACIS from 5-9 July 2021, obtaining the qualification "Conditional Accreditation" (ARACIS Council Decision no. 139 / 28.12.2021).

2. Details about the doctoral school:

Doctoral studies in Theology started at the UOC about 20 years ago (OM no. 3868/2004). With OMEC no. 1805/2007, the UOC became an Organizing Institution for Doctoral Studies (IOSUD) by reconfirming existing PhD supervisors and confirming new supervisors in different fields.

Since the 2012/2013 academic year, doctoral studies are organised within the Doctoral Schools subordinated to the UOC Institute for Doctoral Studies, which administratively coordinates doctoral studies.

3. Details about the doctoral study:

The Doctoral School of Theology was established in 2012 and currently has 8 doctoral supervisors who supervise 51 doctoral students.

II. Methods used

The methods and tools used in the external evaluation process before and during the evaluation visit included the following:

- The analysis of the internal evaluation report of the doctoral study domain under review and its Annexes;
- Review of the 2021 External Evaluation Report, which granted DSUD "conditional accreditation" in order to focus the new evaluation primarily (but not exclusively) on the analysis of performance indicators partially fulfilled or not fulfilled in the first evaluation;
- The analysis of documents made available by the IOSUD, in physical format, during the evaluation visit;
- The analysis of documents, data and information available on the IOSUD/Doctoral School website, in electronic format;
- Visiting the buildings included in the institution's property, comprising:
 - classrooms;
 - the institution's library;
 - lecture halls for students;
 - the Chapel.
- Meeting/discussions with doctoral students in the doctoral study domain under review;
- Meeting/Discussions with the graduates of the doctoral study domain under review;
- Meeting/Discussions with employers of the graduates in the doctoral study domain under review;

¹ Each time when applicable the information shall be presented gender-wise.



- Meeting/Discussions with the school officials of the Doctoral School(s) in which the doctoral study domain under review is operating;
- Meeting/Discussions with the doctoral advisors in the doctoral study domain under review;
- Meeting/discussions with the representatives of the various structures of the IOSUD/Doctoral School in which the doctoral study domain under review is operating:
 - The Council of the Doctoral School, the Quality Assessment and Assurance Commission, the Ethics Commission;
 - secretariats;
- Application of questionnaires to doctoral students and academic staff in the doctoral study domain under review.

Abbreviations used

BOR	Romanian Orthodox Church
CSD	Doctoral School Council
CSUD	Council of University Doctoral Studies
CEAC	Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance
DSUD	Doctoral Studies University Domain
FT	Faculty of Theology
HEI	Higher Education Institution
IOSUD	Institution organising university doctoral studies
MEN	Ministry of National Education
PO	Operational procedure
PPBSUA	Training programme based on advanced university studies
REI	Internal Evaluation Report
SDT	Doctoral School of Theology
SSC	State Secretariat for Religious Affairs
UOC	"Ovidius" University of Constanta



III. Analysis of ARACIS's performance indicators

Domain A. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

Criterion A.1. The administrative, managerial institutional structures and the financial resources

Standard A.1.1. The institution organizing doctoral studies (IOSUD) has implemented the effective functioning mechanisms provided for in the specific legislation on the organization of doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.1. *The existence of specific regulations and their application at the level of the Doctoral School of the respective university doctoral study domain:*

a) *the internal regulations of the Doctoral School:*

[Regulamentul de organizare și funcționare al Școlii doctorale de Teologie](#), in vigour from 19.11.2021.

b) *the Methodology for conducting elections for the position of director of the Council of doctoral school (CSD), as well as elections by the students of their representative in CSD and the evidence of their conduct:*

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021-2022/carta-si-regulamentele/4d/Metodologie-alegeri%20CSUD-CSD%20si%20concur-dir-CSUD-SD_p.pdf

Announcements concerning the organisation of elections at Doctoral School level are published on the UOC website:

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/avizier-doctorat/2963-alegeri-pentru-constituirea-consiliilor-scolilor-doctorale-2022-2027-conducatori-de-doctorat>

c) *the Methodologies for organizing and conducting doctoral studies (for the admission of doctoral students, for the completion of doctoral studies):*

UOC Regulation on the organisation and conduct of the PhD admission competition, adopted by Senate Resolution no. 204/14.04.2022:

<http://www.univ-ovidius.ro/uoc/documente-oficiale/carta-si-regulamentele-universitatii/512>

Regulation on the organisation of the examination for the completion of doctoral studies, through the public defence of the doctoral thesis at the UOC, adopted by Senate Decision no. 495/2017:

<http://www.univ-ovidius.ro/uoc/documente-oficiale/carta-si-regulamentele-universitatii/1429>

d) *the existence of mechanisms for recognizing the status of a Doctoral advisor and the equivalence of the doctoral degree obtained abroad:*

Operational procedure for the recognition of the status of doctoral supervisor and for the equivalence of doctorates obtained in other countries, adopted by the Senate Decision no. 31/31.01.2019:

<http://univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/reglementari/PO%2014.pdf>

e) *functional management structures (Council of the doctoral school), giving as well proof of the regularity of meetings:*

The CSD meets regularly (cf. Minutes of meetings: Annex A.1.1.1.e, covering meetings until 2020). Minutes of the CSD meetings for the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 have been submitted as additional annexes (Additional Annex A.1.1.1.e.pdf).

f) *the contract for doctoral studies:*

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021/doctorat/documente/Contract_2019_Teologie.pdf



g) *internal procedures for the analysis and approval of proposals regarding the training for doctoral study programs based on advanced academic studies.*

The UOC has an Operational Procedure (UOC-PO-02) on the elaboration, revision and approval of curricula for undergraduate, master and doctoral degree programmes in the UOC:

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2019/doctorat/reglementari/PO_02_PLAN-INV_rev1_HS%20%20907_26.11.2018_ex2.pdf

The PPBSUA curriculum has been developed according to this PO.

Specific regulations exist at SDT and UOC level as well. Regarding the way they are applied, from discussions in meetings with the University management, with members of the UOC Ethics Commission and with the CEAC Commission it can be assumed that there are communication difficulties between the central bodies and the SDT. Invoking double subordination in the theological faculties, there have been cases where some doctoral supervisors who are members of governing structures have blocked the application of some rules and regulations; there have also been difficulties in collecting information from the SDT and in handing over some requested documents. In the case of some issues raised within the CSUD, concerning invalidations of some theses at the CNATDCU, the Ethics Commission was unable to take action because the FT's Review Commission considered that these were not justified.

Recommendations: Revision of the SDT Regulations, through a collaboration between the SDT and the UOC management, so that the limits of application of the double subordination are clear and so that both lay and ecclesiastical requirements are respected and taking into account that neither the MEN/Patriarchate/SSC Protocol nor the Regulation Framework of the Faculties of Orthodox Theology restrict the application of university regulations, but only bring clarifications that are mainly related to the respect of the teaching of faith and the morals of the Church. In the case of ethical issues, the possibility of using review commissions from outside the SDT or the UOC could be considered.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.1.2. The doctoral school' Regulation includes mandatory criteria, procedures and standards binding on the aspects specified in Article 17, paragraph (5) of the Government Decision No. 681/2011 on the approval of the Code of Doctoral Studies with subsequent amendments and additions.

The regulations of the Doctoral School includes, apart from other things, the following mandatory criteria, procedures and standards:

- a) the acceptance of new doctoral supervisor members, as well as regulations on how a doctoral supervisor can be withdrawn from the doctoral school: Articles 18-19;
- b) the mechanisms by which decisions are taken regarding the appropriateness, structure and content of the training programme based on advanced university studies: Article 8;
- c) the procedures for changing the doctoral supervisor of a particular doctoral student and the procedures for mediating conflicts: Art. 23-24 (see also UOC-PO-19);
- d) conditions under which the doctoral programme may be interrupted: Art. 25;
- e) the modalities for preventing fraud in scientific research, including plagiarism;



Article 27 (5) of the TDS Regulation provides for sanctions in this case; UOC-PO-13 includes an anti-plagiarism check procedure. On the other hand, the Curriculum includes the Ethics and Academic Integrity course with special chapters dedicated to the prevention of plagiarism. During the period under evaluation there were cases of invalidation of theses by the CNATDCU due to non-compliance with ethics. Communication difficulties have been reported above, § A.1.1.1. However, three retired but still active PhD supervisors withdrew on their own initiative following the reporting of these problems in the CSD (meeting of 15 September 2022).

f) ensuring access to research resources: Article 22;

(g) the obligations on doctoral students to attend: Article 27(4).

The previous evaluation had recommended "Introduction of criteria for granting interruption of studies; Introduction of paragraphs on obligations and attendance arrangements for doctoral students". These recommendations have been implemented (see above).

Recommendations: To complement the Doctoral School Regulations with more specific ways of actively preventing fraud, including plagiarism, in addition to simple sanctions to discourage such practices, e.g.: introducing provisions for regular monitoring of the status of thesis writing (in addition to progress reports), with clear roles for the supervisor and members of the mentoring committee. Also, include a chapter or sections in the regulation containing clear SDT policies on the prevention of fraud and plagiarism, with the development of a guide to this effect and ensuring ownership by doctoral students.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard A.1.2. The IOSUD has the logistical resources necessary to carry out the doctoral studies' mission.

Performance Indicator A.1.2.1. The existence and effectiveness of an appropriate IT system to keep track of doctoral students and their academic background.

To this end, the UOC uses the University Management System (UMS) platform, which manages the academic situation of students in all three cycles of study, from admission to completion (and then as graduates integrated into the labour market). Students have access to their own academic records via their institutional account; the functioning of this platform was verified during the visit to the secretariat.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.1.2.2. The existence and use of an appropriate software program and evidence of its use to verify the percentage of similarity in all doctoral theses.

Since 2021, the UOC has been using the www.sistemantiplagiat.ro application, and in the previous period used the www.plagiarism-detector.com system. Evidence of the use of these software



applications can be found at the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12yc8U_m3UeR3Y274pKZ3zvFkzasYC_VJ?usp=sharing

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard A.1.3. The IOSUD makes sure that financial resources are used optimally, and the revenues obtained from doctoral studies are supplemented through additional funding besides governmental funding.

Performance Indicator A.1.3.1. Existence of at least one research or institutional / human resources development grant under implementation at the time of submission of the internal evaluation file, per doctoral study domain under evaluation, or existence of at least 2 research or institutional development / human resources grant for the doctoral study domain, obtained by doctoral thesis advisors operating in the evaluated domain within the past 5 years. The grants address relevant themes for the respective domain and, as a rule, are engaging doctoral students.

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was not fulfilled (no ongoing grants).

In the last 5 years, a PhD supervisor has coordinated two grants: e-MS:RO-BG 509 "Religious Heritage Across Borders" and "Pilgrims Accommodation and New Host Expertise in Rural Areas (PANHERA)" - 2018-1-RO01-KA204-049274.

A document containing the provisions of a research grant funded by the Archbishopric of Tomis awarded to the SDT of the UOC, to run from 2023-2029, for the implementation of the project "Theology, Science and Mission. Dobrogea's contribution to the national and international spiritual heritage" (Supplementary Annex Grant_Archiepiscopie.pdf).

Recommendations: Involve PhD students in the implementation of the grant acquired. Continue efforts to obtain research, institutional development or human resources grants relevant to the field of Theology and SDT. Continuously update the training of doctoral supervisors in writing projects for research grants, and develop exchanges of experience with colleagues in other institutions who can provide useful information in this regard. Where appropriate and feasible, call on specialised services within or outside the UOC to facilitate these efforts.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.1.3.2. The percentage of doctoral students active at the time of the evaluation, who for at least six months receive additional funding sources besides government funding, through scholarships awarded by individual persons or by legal entities, or who are financially supported through research or institutional / human resources development grants is not less than 20%.

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled as supporting documents for the scholarships awarded had not been submitted and the table of social grants was unsubmitted and unsigned.



According to the situation presented in the REI (p. 20), over the last 5 years, out of the total of 139 PhD students admitted, 26 of them (18%) receive government funding, while the remaining 82% are funded, during the whole period of their PhD studies, from their own sources or through support from other natural or legal persons (including the Church).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.1.3.3.² At least 10% of the total amount of doctoral grants obtained by the university through institutional contracts and of tuition fees collected from the doctoral students enrolled in the paid tuition system is used to reimburse professional training expenses of doctoral students (attending conferences, summer schools, training, programs abroad, publication of specialty papers or other specific forms of dissemination etc.).

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was not fulfilled as no supporting documents had been submitted.

The SDT Regulation stipulates (Art. 22 [3]) that "SDT supports the research activity of doctoral students by reimbursing their participation in conferences, summer schools, courses, internships abroad, within the limit of the financial resources allocated for this purpose. SDT may also decide to pay for the publication of scholarly articles or other specific forms of dissemination. At least 10% of the total amount of doctoral grants obtained by the university under institutional contract and of the tuition fees collected from doctoral students in the SDSU fee-paying form shall be used annually for this purpose."

In the REI submitted to the present evaluation it is stated that "in the last 5 years, the budget of the Doctoral School of Theology provides under the chapter "Other expenses (35%)" amounts allocated for the expenses of professional training of doctoral students in Summer Schools, courses and internships abroad, publication of articles and other forms specific to doctoral education. Annex 1.3.3.b (SDT budgets 2018-2022)".

In Annex 1.3.3.b (Budget of the Doctoral School of Theology), the category "Other expenditure (35%)" does not specify what expenditure is concerned, so it does not appear that it relates to the settlement of doctoral students' expenses. The Commission requested additional documents and the Doctoral School submitted as an additional annex A.1.3.3. Expenses_SD_Theology.pdf.

According to the reply to the submission of the additional annexes (Reply_SDT_15 June 2023 (1).pdf), the expenses for publication of studies and travel of doctoral students to scientific events are those listed under the category "Travel expenses" in the Statement of Budget Execution for the Doctoral School of Theology, 2018-2022 (the above mentioned annex).

Thus, in the period 2018-2022 (not including the year 2021, in which there were no trips due to the pandemic), the income obtained by the Doctoral School from doctoral grants and tuition fees totalled 2,793,760.33 lei. In the category "Travel expenses", which the Doctoral School claims is doctoral students'

² The indicators marked with an asterisk (*) hold a special status, referring exclusively to the evaluation of doctoral studies domains, as per Article 12 from the annex No.1 of the Order of the minister of education No. 3651/12.04.2021 approving the Methodology for evaluating university doctoral studies and the system of criteria, standards and performance indicators used in the evaluation. In case they are not met, the Agency extends a period of maximum 3 years to IOSUD to correct the respective deficiencies.



travel (in fact the only category where expenses other than salaries appear), the total is 12,882.05 lei, i.e. 0.46%.

If we consider only the year 2022 (i.e. the situation after the previous evaluation), the income of the Doctoral School from government grants and tuition fees was 582,890 lei and the travel expenses were 3,840 lei, i.e. 0.66%.

From the above, it appears that a very small percentage of the funding is currently used to settle doctoral students' expenses. However, 28% of the doctoral students responded to the questionnaire that they had been reimbursed for these expenses.

A Plan of measures to improve the percentage of settlements to doctoral students in SDT, UOC has been submitted as a supplementary annex (Plan_masuri_decontari.pdf).

Recommendations: Consistent implementation of the submitted action plan. In addition, consideration could be given to whether the procedure for settling expenses could be simplified to facilitate access to these funds. Ongoing monitoring of the status of doctoral candidates' claims for reimbursement of expenses could also be carried out. Doctoral students could also be made aware of the advantages of using the reimbursement of expenses, as doctoral research requires dissemination of results through participation in scientific events and publication of contributions.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Criterion A.2. Research infrastructure

Standard A.2.1. The IOSUD has a modern research infrastructure to support the conduct of doctoral studies' specific activities.

Performance Indicator A.2.1.1. The venues and the material equipment available to the doctoral school enable the research activities in the evaluated domain to be carried out, in line with the assumed mission and objectives (computers, specific software, equipment, laboratory equipment, library, access to international databases etc.). The research infrastructure and the provision of research services are presented to the public through a specific platform. The research infrastructure described above, which was purchased and developed within the past 5 years will be presented distinctly.

SDT uses the UOC material base, namely room 37 in the building on Aleea Universității 1, Corpus A, and room 5 in the building on Ion Vodă Street 58. In these spaces, PhD students have access to internet, computers, multifunctional printer, video projector with screen. (Supplementary Annex Answer_SD_T_15 June 2023 (1).pdf)

Access to academic databases is ensured through the UOC's "Ioan Popișteanu" University Library: Anelis Plus, through E-nformation. The PhD students' answers to the questionnaire confirm the possibility of access to these databases (see also below, § C.2.2.1.).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.



Criterion A.3. Quality of Human Resources

Standard A.3.1. At the level of each domain there are sufficient qualified staff to ensure the conduct of doctoral study program.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.1. Minimum three doctoral thesis advisors within that doctoral domain, and at least 50% of them (but no less than three) meet the minimum standards of the National Council for Attestation of University Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU) in force at the time when the evaluation is carried out, which standards are required and mandatory for obtaining the enabling certification.

In the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled, as some lecturers did not submit their check sheets and those submitted were filled in incorrectly, with the scores often not being met. Only two PhD supervisors (out of 9) achieved the standards. The Commission recommended that the UOC should annually verify the degree to which each PhD supervisor has fulfilled the current CNATDCU standards.

This time again some files were not properly completed. These were not taken into account when checking the fulfilment of the indicator.

However, 5 PhD supervisors out of the total of 8 meet the CNATDCU standards in vigour.

Recommendations: Continue to monitor the completion of check sheets to ensure that all these documents are completed accurately.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.1.2. At least 50% of all doctoral advisors have a full-time employment contract for an indefinite period with the IOSUD.

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled, with only 20% of the titulars. The Commission recommended restoring the balance between full-time and part-time teaching staff.

The Doctoral School has made efforts to improve the situation and at the time of the evaluation there are 4 full-time out of a total of 8 supervisors.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator A.3.1.3. The study subjects in the education program based on advanced higher education studies pertaining to the doctoral domain are taught by teaching staff or researchers who are doctoral thesis advisors / certified doctoral thesis advisors, professors / CS I or lecturer / CS II, with proved expertise in the field of the study subjects they teach, or other specialists in the field who meet the standards established by the institution in relation with the aforementioned teaching and research functions, as provided by the law.



As shown in the timetable, all PPBSUA subjects are taught by SDT PhD supervisors. Some subjects are taught by professors who have a different area of specialization than the discipline, as shown in the CVs and the area of specialization indicated on the PhD supervisors' page. Thus, a specialist in New Testament teaches a course in the area of Dogmatic Theology, and a specialist in Church History and Missiology teaches Fundamental Theology.

Recommendations: Given that this is an advanced study programme for doctoral students, it would be desirable that all the disciplines in the PPBSUA be taught by professors with research activity in the narrow area of these disciplines.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.1.4. The percentage of doctoral thesis advisors who concomitantly coordinate more than 8 doctoral students, but no more than 12, who are themselves studying in doctoral programs³ does not exceed 20%.

In the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled, with 7 out of 9 PhD supervisors coordinating more than 8 PhD students. The Commission recommended that the number of doctoral students allocated to each supervisor should be reduced, that fewer vacancies should be advertised and that the UOC should monitor and coordinate more closely the advertisement of doctoral student vacancies.

At the time of the present evaluation, all PhD supervisors are coordinating a maximum of 8 PhD students at the same time (REI, p. 19; Annex A.3.1.4).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard A.3.2. The Doctoral advisors within the domain are carrying out a scientific activity visible at international level.

Performance Indicator A.3.2.1. At least 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in the evaluated domain have at least 5 Web of Science- or ERIH-indexed publications in magazines of impact, or other achievements of relevant significance for that domain, including international-level contributions that indicate progress in scientific research - development - innovation for the evaluated domain. The aforementioned doctoral thesis advisors enjoy international awareness within the past five years, consisting of: membership on scientific boards of international publications and conferences; membership on boards of international professional associations; guests in conferences or expert groups working abroad, or membership on doctoral defense commissions at universities abroad or co-leading with universities abroad. For Arts and Sports and Physical Education Sciences, doctoral thesis advisors shall

³ 3 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 159, paragraph (3), respectively 4 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 174, paragraph (3) of the Law of national education No.1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions, with additional extension periods approved as per Article 39, paragraph (3) of the Code of doctoral studies approved by the GD No. 681/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions.



prove their international visibility within the past five years by their membership on the boards of professional associations, membership in organizing committees of arts events and international competitions, membership on juries or umpire teams in artistic events or international competitions.

In the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled, with only three out of nine professors fulfilling criterion C.4. of the CNATDCU fiche.

Currently, according to the CVs and CNATDCU check sheets (Annexes A.3.1.1.a-h and A.3.1.3.a-h respectively), 6 of the 8 PhD supervisors have at least 5 Web of Science or ERIH+ publications, and 5 of them (i.e. 62.5% of the total) have international visibility in the last 5 years.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *A.3.2.2. At least 50% of the doctoral thesis advisors in a specific doctoral study domain continue to be active in their scientific field, and acquire at least 25% of the score requested by the minimal CNATDCU standards in force at the time of the evaluation, which are required and mandatory for acquiring their enabling certificate, based on their scientific results within the past five years.

Of the 8 PhD supervisors assigned to the field of Theology at the UOC, 5 have obtained more than 25% of the minimum CNATDCU score based on the activity of the last 5 years, so 62.5% of them meet the requirements of this indicator (A.3.2.2. FV_last 5 years.pdf).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Domain B. EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Criterion B.1. The number, quality and diversity of candidates enrolled for the admission contest

Standard B.1.1. The institution organizing doctoral studies has the capacity to attract candidates from outside the higher education institution or a number of candidates exceeding the number of seats available.

Performance Indicator *B.1.1.1. The ratio between the number of graduates of masters' programs of other higher education institutions, national or foreign, who have enrolled for the doctoral admission contest within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget, put out through contest within the doctoral domain is at least 0.2 or the ratio between the number of candidates within the past five years and the number of seats funded by the state budget put out through contest within the doctoral studies domain is at least 1,2.



From the situation presented in the REI (p. 20) and updated in the reply to the request for additional documents, the following figures for the last 5 years emerge:

a.	No. of Master's graduates from other HEIs	22
b.	No. of places from budget	19
c.	<i>Ratio a/b</i>	<i>1,15</i>
d.	Total number of candidates	119
e.	<i>Ratio d/b</i>	<i>6,26</i>

The two ratios are much higher than the required minimum, so the indicator is fulfilled in both variants. However, this is due to the very small number of budgeted places in relation to the number of applicants (about 15%), which is a disadvantage in other respects (discussed under other indicators). (Response_SDT_15 June 2023 (1).pdf)

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard B.1.2 Candidates admitted to doctoral studies demonstrate academic, research and professional performance.

Performance Indicator *B.1.2.1. Admission to doctoral study programs is based on selection criteria including: previous academic, research and professional performance, their interest for scientific or arts/sports research, publications in the domain and a proposal for a research subject. Interviewing the candidate is compulsory, as part of the admission procedure.

In the previous evaluation, the committee recommended that scientific work prior to the entrance exam should be included among the admission criteria, or at least among the criteria for deciding between candidates.

The application file for admission to the UOC doctoral programme includes, among other things, a curriculum vitae, a list of the candidate's scientific works, if applicable, and a proposal for a research project (according to the model in the annex).

According to the admission criteria of the SDT, academic performance is taken into account by requiring that the "average of enrolment" (70% of the average of undergraduate studies [sum of the average of the years of study + undergraduate average / 5] + 30% of the average of master's studies [sum of the average of the years of study + dissertation average / 3] be a minimum of 8.51, as provided for by the Resolution of the Holy Synod BOR no. 6342/1998. The admission tests also consist of a written test on the teaching of the Orthodox faith (50% weighting) and an interview evaluating the doctoral research project submitted in the admission file (50% weighting). The pass mark for each examination must be at least 8.00.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.1.2.2. *The expelling rate, including renouncement / dropping out of doctoral students 3, respectively 4, years after admission⁴ does not exceed 30%.*

In the previous evaluation, the committee recommended strategies to prevent early school leaving, which was within accepted limits but high in some years.

According to the REI (§ B122, p. 21), the expulsion rate over the last 5 years has been between 0 and 50% (this peaked during the COVID-19 pandemic), with an average of 22%, which is within the accepted maximum.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion B.2. The content of doctoral programs

Standard B.2.1. *The training program based on advanced university studies is appropriate to improve doctoral students' research skills and to strengthen ethical behavior in science.*

Performance Indicator B.2.1.1. *The training program based on advanced academic studies includes at least 3 disciplines relevant to the scientific research training of doctoral students; at least one of these disciplines is intended to study in-depth the research methodology and/or the statistical data processing.*

In the previous evaluation, the commission recommended the inclusion of content beyond the informational level and its appropriateness to the level of doctoral studies; also the updating of the bibliography for some disciplines. This has largely been achieved, but there are still areas for improvement.

The PPBSUA timetable, i.e. the Syllabus, includes some compulsory subjects for all doctoral students (Teaching of Faith and Mission of the Orthodox Church, Ethics and Academic Integrity, Modern Research Methods in Theology, Biblical and Patristic Greek Language and Literature) as well as a package of optional subjects (with 10 options).

Some of the subjects (by name and content) are more relevant for the undergraduate cycle: Fundamental Theology, History of the Church, Teaching of Faith and Mission of the Orthodox Church.

Recommendations: All disciplines taught in the PPBSUA should ensure that doctoral students acquire knowledge at the most advanced level in the field of Theology and in the borderline fields, the most advanced and specialised skills, and full scientific and professional maturity, as required by EQF/EQF level 8 (PhD).

⁴ 3 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 159, paragraph (3), respectively 4 years for the doctoral university studies with the duration stipulated at Article 174, paragraph (3) of the Law of national education No. 1/2011 with subsequent amendments and additions.



The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.2. *At least one discipline is dedicated to Ethics and Intellectual Property in scientific research or there are well-defined topics on these subjects within a discipline taught in the doctoral program.*

There is a compulsory course on Ethics and Academic Integrity in the curriculum.

In the previous evaluation, the commission recommended that the bibliography of this course should also include ethics legislation as well as European and international practice.

As it appears from the subject sheet, a report published by UEFISCDI on this subject has been included in the bibliography of this course: Analysis of international good practice on ethics and integrity in higher education (2018).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.3. *The IOSUD has mechanisms to ensure that the academic training program based on advanced university studies addresses „the learning outcomes”, specifying the knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy that doctoral students should acquire after completing each discipline or through the research activities⁵.*

In the previous evaluation, the commission recommended improving the process of identification and development of domain-specific competences and skills, improving the work of mentoring commissions, creating mechanisms for regular evaluation of the competences and skills concerned.

The PPBSUA Curriculum explains the overall mission of doctoral studies within the SDT, as well as the professional and transversal competences targeted. Also, the subject sheets offered in the PPBSUA include the learning outcomes with the different objectives pursued.

The SDT Regulations state that doctoral students have the possibility to choose between the optional disciplines of the PPBSUA; verification of the acquisition of the expected knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy is done by examination in the disciplines of this programme. Passing these with a minimum grade of 8 is required for PhD students to be able to proceed to the scientific research programme (Art. 8 [4], 8 [8]; Art. 9).

In addition, the PPBSUA is subject to regular internal evaluation, the results of which are included in the annual report of the SDT Director. The work of doctoral students is also continuously evaluated in terms of the results of their work and compliance with research ethics (Art. 27).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

⁵ Or by what the graduate should know, understand and to be able to do, according to the provisions of the Methodology of 17 March 2017 regarding inscription and registration of higher education qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications in Higher Education (RNCIS) approved by the Order No.3475/2017 with subsequent amendments and additions.



Performance Indicator B.2.1.4. *All along the duration of the doctoral training, doctoral students in the domain receive counselling/guidance from functional guidance commissions, which is reflected in written guidance and feedback or regular meeting.*

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled. The Commission recommended revising the SDT regulations and decisions and distributing the scientific progress reports throughout the doctoral stage (not only in the second year); also, making minutes with more information, suggestions and recommendations so that the feedback given to students is more consistent and applicable.

All PhD students benefit from the advice of the mentoring commissions, especially during the progress report meetings. The SDT Board has established that progress reports, which are reviewed by the mentoring commission, should be submitted every semester.

From the minutes of the PhD students' oral presentations (provided in the individual plan) it appears that they benefit from guidance and views expressed by the members of the mentoring committees, but these are still of a general nature and similar from one report to another (such as "improvement of the bibliography", without further details). From 2022 onwards, some concrete and specific recommendations on certain aspects of the research appear (Annexes B.2.1.4.a-b).

Recommendations: Introduction in the SDT regulations of specific provisions for the work of the mentoring committee (in addition to participation in oral presentations), in order to support more concretely the work of PhD students. Regular monitoring of the work of the mentoring committees, so that the views expressed and the advice given are targeted at specific aspects of improving doctoral students' research.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator B.2.1.5. *For a doctoral study domain, the ratio between the number of doctoral students and the number of teaching staff/researchers providing doctoral guidance must not exceed 3:1.*

At the previous evaluation (July 2021), the indicator was partially fulfilled as the ratio was 7.5:1 (138 PhD students to 18 PhD supervisors). The commission recommended diversifying the mentoring committees by co-opting PhD experts, even from outside the institution; it also recommended that the approval of PhD commissions should be annual and, if research developments require it, that some committees should be modified annually by co-opting those specialists who contribute to the topics/chapters in the work.

According to Annex B.2.1.5. report-drd-supervisors.pdf, at present, the 55 PhD students are supervised by commissions of 53 academic staff, with a ratio of 1.03:1.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion B.3. The results of doctoral studies and procedures for their evaluation.

Standard B.3.1. Doctoral students capitalize on the research through presentations at scientific conferences, scientific publications, technological transfer, patents, products and service orders.

Performance Indicator B.3.1.1. *For the evaluated domain, the evaluation commission will be provided with at least one paper or some other relevant contribution per doctoral student who has obtained a doctor's title within the past 5 years. From this list, the members of the evaluation commission shall randomly select 5 such papers / relevant contributions per doctoral study domain for review. At least 3 selected papers must contain significant original contributions in the respective domain.*

Supplementary Annex [B.3.1.1. LL_absolventi.pdf] contains a table of 66 graduates with a PhD confirmed in the last 5 years, who have between 1 and 11 articles or other relevant contributions each, in total 214.

The Commission selected the following articles for analysis:

1. Ioan Dura, Ion Ene, Andrei Hera, Ion Pană, Aureliu Voicu, „On the Dubious Relationship between Fundamentalism and Terrorism“, *Romanian Journal of Artistic Creativity* 9 (1/2021), 85-98.

The contribution tackles a delicate subject and, based on ideological principles and facts illustrated by statistics from recent years, formulates a clear conclusion: religious fundamentalism threatens security in society, which should have been developed further than the few lines it contains. Rating: 5.

2. Valentin Negrescu, „[Knowing God in the Old Testament through the Divine Names](#)“, în Ioan Dura (ed.) *Knowledge, Reality, Transcendence. A Dialogue between East and West. 2nd International Conference “Religion, Knowledge, Society”. Proceedings Book*, Ed. Astra Museum, Cluj-Napoca 2018, 191-202

Unfortunately, the article does not bring anything new but, moreover, takes important parts of Petre Semen's article, "The theological values of the divine tetragrammaton", *Plērōma* 8 (3/2006) 61-82, which he translates into English, without even mentioning the author. Rating: 1.

3. Edvica Popa, „[Man and his quality as an image of God in Patristic Thinking](#)“, *Icoana credinței. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research* 14 (2021) 92-97.

The article attempts to summarise the quality of man as the image of God according to Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great and Maximus the Confessor (although the title refers to the whole of patristics, which would be excessive for a work of this size, unless this is also the case for three authors). The conclusions are well summarised (although based on Nicholas Cabasilas, not necessarily on the author's reflection). More attention could have been paid to the English translation. Rating: 3.

4. Oana Raluca Ghiță, „[Pârvu Mutu, cel mai mare pictor român bisericesc](#)“, în G. Stoica-Marcu (coord.), *Legislație și Teologie*, Ed. RoRus-Nipponica, Craiova 2015, 43-49.

The article includes a biography of the painter Pârvu Mutu, reviewing his main works. The information given does not add anything new, but repeats what can be found in various well-known sources. The title does not correspond to the content, as the author does not demonstrate why Pârvu Mutu deserves to be considered as "the greatest Romanian church painter". Rating: 2.

5. Radu Rodin Ilinoiu, „[Ministry and External Mission in the Writings and Thoughts of Saint Sophrony Sakharov](#)“, în Mihai Hincinschi - Lucian Colda (eds.), *Educația creștină într-o cultură pluralistă. Cum creștem copiii în lumea de azi*, Ed. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia - Felicitas Publishing House, Stockholm, 2020, 303-321.



The study is systematically structured and succeeds in achieving what it announces. The conclusions drawn from the works of St. Sophronius are useful for further research on the subject. Rating: 5.

Out of the 5 works selected by the survey, 3 were found to make a significant contribution to the field of Theology. Unfortunately, there are two others that do not rise to the level of a research publication.

Recommendations: The recommendation from the previous evaluation, which called for verification of scientific publications by PhD supervisors before publication, remains valid. It would also be desirable to have a more thorough evaluation of the way in which doctoral students are guided in the drafting of these papers in order to avoid publishing articles that are mere compilations or that repeat general and well-known information, without adding anything new.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.1.2. *The ratio between the number of presentations of doctoral students who completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years), including posters, exhibitions made at prestigious international events (organized in the country or abroad) and the number of doctoral students who have completed their doctoral studies within the evaluated period (past 5 years) is at least 1.*

The additional annex [B.3.1.2. Manif_internat_absolventi.pdf] contains a list of 28 graduates from the last 5 years (2018-2022), with 68 articles and conference participations, including 32 presentations at prestigious international events, both in the country and abroad. Taking into account that the total number of graduates with confirmed PhD degree from the last 5 years is 66 [B.3.1.1. LL_absolventi.pdf], the resulting ratio is 0.53:1.

The situation could be improved if the plan of measures to increase the amount of doctoral students' grants is implemented, including for activities related to this indicator (see above, § A.1.3.3.).

Recommendations: Analyse the reasons why doctoral students participate only to a small extent with presentations at international scientific events (at home and abroad) and draw up a plan of measures to increase this participation, so that within 2 years and 6 months the number of presentations at international scientific events is at least equal to the number of graduates.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Standard B.3.2. *The Doctoral School engages a significant number of external scientific specialists in the commissions for public defense of doctoral theses in the analyzed domain.*

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.1. *The number of doctoral theses allocated to one specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the evaluated IOSUD should not exceed two (2) in a year for the theses coordinated by the same doctoral thesis advisor.*

At the previous visit, the indicator was partially fulfilled, with more than 20 cases where the same CD was invited to 4-5 defences at the same PhD supervisor. The Commission recommended "to bring



this indicator into optimal parameters by co-opting as many specialists as possible in the thesis defense commissions".

In 2021-2022, the situation was not repeated, with referees from other HEIs being invited to a maximum of two defences per year with the same PhD supervisor.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *B.3.2.2. *The ratio between the doctoral theses allocated to one scientific specialist coming from a higher education institution, other than the institution where the defense on the doctoral thesis is organized, and the number of doctoral theses presented in the same doctoral study domain in the doctoral school should not exceed 0.3, considering the past five years. Only those doctoral study domains in which minimum ten doctoral theses have been presented within the past five years should be analyzed.*

At the previous visit, the commission recommended the inclusion of internal regulations with attention thresholds on this indicator and the diversification of the list of specialists invited as expert referees.

According to the Annex [B.3.2.2 Rap-abs.-referenti.pdf], in the period 2017-2022, the ratio of theses assigned to a specific referee from other HEIs to the total number of theses defended in this period (77) varies between 0.01 and 0.25, thus falling within the required limits.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Domain C. QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Criterion C.1. Existence and periodic implementation of the internal quality assurance system

Standard C.1.1. There are an institutional framework and procedures in place and relevant internal quality assurance policies, applied for monitoring the internal quality assurance.

Performance Indicator C.1.1.1. *The Doctoral school in the respective university study domain shall demonstrate the continuous development of the evaluation process and its internal quality assurance following a procedure developed and applied at the level of the IOSUD, the following assessed criteria being mandatory:*

- (a) the scientific work of Doctoral advisors;*
- (b) the infrastructure and logistics necessary to carry out the research activity;*
- (c) the procedures and subsequent rules based on which doctoral studies are organized;*
- (d) the scientific activity of doctoral students;*
- (e) the training program based on advanced academic studies of doctoral students;*



f) social and academic services (including for participation at different events, publishing papers etc.) and counselling made available to doctoral students.

At the previous visit, the commission recommended "conducting evaluations with more honesty and accountability to identify weaknesses and dysfunctions early and remedy them so that they do not make the SDT vulnerable".

As a Supplementary Annex [C.1.1.1. Report_eval_2022_SDT.pdf] the Report of the Director of SDT on the scientific research performance of PhD supervisors and PhD students at the end of 2022 was submitted as an example. It discusses the assessment of the issues mentioned in points a)-e) above and proposes a number of measures for improvement, including for point f).

Recommendations: Insist in the future on such evaluation activities and verification of the implementation of the planned quality improvement measures. Better collaboration with the UOC's CEAC, with more prompt responses to its requests.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator *C.1.1.2. Mechanisms are implemented during the stage of the doctoral study program to enable feedback from doctoral students allowing to identify their needs, as well as their overall level of satisfaction with the doctoral study program in order to ensure continuous improvement of the academic and administrative processes. Following the analysis of the results, there is evidence that an action plan was drafted and implemented.

REI refers to Annex [C.1.1.2. Rap_centru_consil_abs.pdf], containing the Evaluation of the perception towards doctoral studies and professional development of UOC graduates, SDT, field of Theology, graduating years 2016-2020, prepared by the Director of the UOC Counselling Centre, Prof. Gheorghe Raftu.

As an additional annex has been submitted [C.1.1.2 pv_csdt_masuri-drd.pdf], minutes of a CSD meeting of 13 December 2021, at which measures were decided to improve access to the BDI, to improve the library's supply, as well as the introduction of an optional career guidance course, at the request of PhD students; the details are very general.

Recommendations: Establish more detailed and concrete measures to improve academic processes and check how they have been implemented and the results achieved, including comparing the results of surveys among doctoral students from one year to the next.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion C.2. Transparency of information and accessibility of learning resources

Standard C.2.1. Information of interest to doctoral students, future candidates and public interest information is available for electronic format consultation.



Performance Indicator C.2.1.1. The IOSUD publishes on the website of the organizing institution, in compliance with the general regulations on data protection, information such as:

a) the Doctoral School regulation:

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021-2022/doctorat/Regulament_SDT_CSD_DJC.PDF

b) the admission regulation:

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2022-2023/doctorat/admitere/Req_admitere_ISD-aprobat.pdf

c) the doctoral studies contract:

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2021/doctorat/documente/Contract_2019_Teologie.pdf

d) the study completion regulation including the procedure for the public presentation of the thesis:

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/-docs/regulamente/v9/Regulament%20privind%20organizarea%20examenui%20de%20finalizare%20a%20studiilor%20universitare%20de%20doctorat.pdf>

(e) the content of training program based on advanced academic studies:

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2022-2023/doctorat/Plan.inv_SDT-fin.pdf

(f) the academic and scientific profile, thematic areas/research themes of the Doctoral advisors within the domain, as well as their institutional contact data:

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/conducatori-de-doctorat>

(g) the list of doctoral students within the domain with necessary information (year of registration; advisor):

https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2022-2023/doctorat/scoli_doctorale/teologie/Lista_SDT-drd_2022_2023.pdf

(h) information on the standards for developing the doctoral thesis:

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/images/2022-2023/doctorat/Ghid%20redactare%20proiect%20-%20raport%20-%20teza%20-%20rezumat.pdf>

(i) links to the doctoral theses' summaries to be publicly presented and the date, time, place where they will be presented; this information will be communicated at least twenty days before the presentation:

<https://www.univ-ovidius.ro/sustinerea-publica-a-tezelor-de-doctorat>

In the previous evaluation, the commission recommended "customising the guidelines for researching, writing and defending a doctoral thesis in the field of theology". This recommendation was taken into account when drafting the guide containing the standards for thesis writing (point h above).

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Standard C.2.2. The IOSUD/The Doctoral School provides doctoral students with access to the resources needed for conducting doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.1. All doctoral students have free access to one platform providing academic databases relevant to the doctoral studies domain of their thesis.



Through the "Ioan Popișteanu" University Library, PhD students have access to academic databases through the Enformation service. Among the databases to which the UOC has access through this platform, relevant to the field of Theology are Web of Science and Scopus. On the Library's page, access to other databases through the same platform (e.g. JSTOR) is announced, but accessing Enformation reveals that the UOC is not among the partner institutions.

Recommendations: Requesting the extension of access for PhD students and teaching staff to other databases relevant to the field of Theology, such as: ATLA, CEEOL, EBSCO or JSTOR. Keeping on the Library page only those links to academic databases to which users actually have access.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.2. Each doctoral student shall have access, upon request, to an electronic system for verifying the degree of similarity with other existing scientific or artistic works.

The previous evaluation recommended "the use of similarity checking software for other scientific achievements of PhD students" (apart from the PhD thesis).

According to the Operational Procedure on Anti-Plagiarism Checking of Scientific Works produced in the framework of the UOC PhD programmes (OP-13), all PhD students have access, with the approval of the PhD supervisor, to the similarity checking software system for projects, research reports and PhD theses. The application can be downloaded from the UOC website.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.2.2.3. All doctoral students have access to scientific research laboratories or other facilities depending on the specific domain/domains within the Doctoral School, according to internal order procedures.

The SDT Regulation stipulates (art. 22) that PhD students have "the right of access to the material base and to the use of the research infrastructure of the SDT, namely: a) the facilities allocated for use by PhD students; b) the scientific research centres; c) the "Ioan Popișteanu" University Library, including the Digital Library, which provides access to international databases.

The research centres operating within the Faculty are the Centre for Religious and Juridical-Canonical Studies and Research of the Three Monotheistic Religions (Mosaic, Christian and Islamic) and the Centre for Research in the Dialogue between Science and Theology.

Recommendations: -

The indicator is fulfilled.

Criterion C.3. Internationalization



Standard C.3.1. There is a strategy in place and it is applied to enhance the internationalization of doctoral studies.

Performance Indicator *C.3.1.1. *IOSUD, for every evaluated domain, has concluded mobility agreements with universities abroad, with research institutes, with companies working in the field of study, aimed at the mobility of doctoral students and academic staff (e.g., ERASMUS agreements for the doctoral studies). At least 35% of the doctoral students have completed a training course abroad or other mobility forms such as attending international scientific conferences. IOSUD drafts and applies policies and measures aiming at increasing the number of doctoral students participating at mobility periods abroad, up to at least 20%, which is the target at the level of the European Higher Education Area.*

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled, as only one doctoral student had undertaken an international (practice) mobility during the period evaluated. The Commission recommended "encouraging doctoral students to apply for and undertake Erasmus or other types of academic mobility".

The UOC has concluded Erasmus agreements with several universities abroad, five of which are in the field of Theology (see Annexes C.3.1.1.a.-c.).

In the case of Erasmus mobilities, only one doctoral student in Theology took part. In 2022, 5 doctoral students participated in an international conference in Batumi, and in 2023, another 4 doctoral students took part in an international conference in Croatia, which means a participation in mobilities of about 20%.

The implementation of the CNFIS ESPERO project at the UOC (see below, § C 3.1.3) has resulted in an increase in the number of mobilities.

Recommendations: Develop SDT's international relations through measures to increase the number of doctoral students participating in mobilities. Improving information on the possibilities of international mobility and funding of them, as desired by doctoral students.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.2. *In the evaluated doctoral study domain, support is granted, including financial support, to the organization of doctoral studies in international co-tutelage or invitation of leading experts to deliver courses/lectures for doctoral students.*

At the previous evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled. The Commission recommended "developing bilateral relations and organising more cotutelle PhDs; inviting academics from foreign educational institutions to give lectures/courses in the field of theology".

The SDT has organised cotutelle doctorates, one of which is still ongoing (as in the previous evaluation), namely with the National and Capodistrian University of Zografou (Athens): see Annex C.3.1.2, and another cotutelle with the Pontifical University "John Paul II" in Krakow was organised during the period under evaluation.

The FTO's Circle of History and Philosophy of Religions regularly organised conferences with visiting professors from abroad, including for PhD students (the last of which will take place in 2021).



Recommendations: Resumption of the series of guest lectures from other countries; consider the possibility of inviting international experts to lecture at PPBSUA. Organise international cotutelle PhDs in the future.

The indicator is fulfilled.

Performance Indicator C.3.1.3. *The internationalization of activities carried out during the doctoral studies is supported by IOSUD through concrete measures (e.g., by participating in educational fairs to attract international doctoral students; by including international experts in guidance committees or doctoral committees etc.).*

At the 2021 evaluation, the indicator was partially fulfilled. The Commission recommended "inviting more academics from abroad to participate in the process of mentoring, advising and evaluating PhD theses".

An international expert (Prof. Dr. Ketevan Pavliashvili from the Patriarchal University of Georgia in Tbilisi) was invited to defend a thesis on 24 September 2020 (see Annex C.3.1.3).

One of the results of the implementation of the CNFIS ESPERO project - extending the internationalisation strategy and increasing the visibility of the UOC through international promotional actions as a comprehensive multicultural university - was the participation in international educational fairs, such as Begin Edu Fair in Serbia (October 2022). However, the participations in such educational fairs cover the UOC as a whole, with no specific reference to doctorates in theology.

Recommendations: Inviting more international experts to the doctoral thesis supervision and defense commissions. Participation in educational fairs with the specific presentation of the offer of doctoral studies in theology at the UOC, respectively promotion of this offer on international websites.

The indicator is partially fulfilled.

IV. SWOT Analysis

<p><u>Strengths:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good relationship with the main employer, the Archbishopric of Tomis • Interdisciplinary training of several PhD supervisors • Ability to rapidly improve the quality of education • Large number of applicants for admission, including from other HEIs 	<p><u>Weaknesses:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The family situation of some PhD students, which hampers mobility and, in general, the progress of research • Low number of budgeted places • Avoidance of discussing problems (in the case of some professors) • Library less equipped in the field of Theology • Some institutional communication problems • Proportion of 50% retired PhD supervisors • Internationalisation at an early stage
<p><u>Opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The potential of the Dobrogea region for research on early Christianity • The possibility of developing international collaborations started with other Black Sea Universities • The requirement or recommendation of a doctorate in Theology for certain Church or teaching positions 	<p><u>Threats:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unfavourable image in the mass-media • Decreasing number of students in general • lack of interest in the field of Theology in the National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation

V. Overview of judgments awarded and of the recommendations

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
1.	PI	A.1.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Revision of the SDT Regulations, through a collaboration between the SDT and the UOC management, so that the limits of application of the double subordination are clear and so that both lay and ecclesiastical requirements are respected and taking into account that neither the MEN/Patriarchate/SSC Protocol nor the Framework Regulations of the Faculties of Orthodox Theology restrict the application of university regulations, but only bring clarifications that are mainly related to the respect of the teaching of faith and morality of the Church. In the case of ethical issues, the possibility of calling on review committees outside the SDT, i.e. the UOC, could be considered.
2.	PI	A.1.1.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	To complement the Doctoral School Regulations with more specific ways of actively preventing fraud, including plagiarism, in addition to simple sanctions to discourage such practices, e.g.: introducing provisions for regular monitoring of the status of thesis writing (in addition to progress reports), with clear roles for the supervisor and members of the mentoring committee. Also, include a chapter or sections in the regulation containing clear SDT policies on the prevention of fraud and plagiarism, with the development of a guide to this effect and ensuring ownership by doctoral students.
3.	PI	A.1.2.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
4.	PI	A.1.2.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
5.	IP	A.1.3.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Involve PhD students in the implementation of the grant acquired. Continue efforts to obtain research, institutional development or human resources grants relevant to the field of Theology and SDT. Continuously update the training of doctoral supervisors in writing projects for research grants, and develop exchanges of experience with colleagues in other institutions who can provide useful information in this regard. Where appropriate and

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
				feasible, call on specialised services within or outside the UOC to facilitate these efforts.
6.	PI *	A.1.3.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
7.	PI *	A.1.3.3.	<i>partially fulfilled</i>	Consistent implementation of the submitted action plan. In addition, consideration could be given to whether the procedure for settling expenses could be simplified to facilitate access to these funds. Ongoing monitoring of the status of doctoral candidates' claims for reimbursement of expenses could also be carried out. Doctoral students could also be made aware of the advantages of using the reimbursement of expenses, as doctoral research requires dissemination of results through participation in scientific events and publication of contributions.
8.	CPI	A.2.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
9.	CPI	A.3.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Continue to monitor the completion of check sheets to ensure that all these documents are completed accurately.
10.	PI *	A.3.1.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
11.	PI	A.3.1.3.	<i>partially fulfilled</i>	Given that this is an advanced study programme for doctoral students, it would be desirable that all the disciplines in the PPBSUA be taught by professors with research activity in the narrow area of these disciplines.
12.	PI *	A.3.1.4.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
13.	CPI	A.3.2.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
14.	PI *	A.3.2.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
15.	PI *	B.1.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
16.	PI *	B.1.2.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
17.	PI	B.1.2.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
18.	PI	B.2.1.1.	<i>partially fulfilled</i>	All disciplines taught in the PPBSUA should ensure that doctoral students acquire knowledge at the most advanced level in the field of Theology and in the

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
				borderline fields, the most advanced and specialised skills, and full scientific and professional maturity, as required by EQF/EQF level 8 (PhD).
19.	PI	B.2.1.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
20.	PI	B.2.1.3.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
21.	PI	B.2.1.4.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Introduction in the SDT regulations of specific provisions for the work of the mentoring committee (in addition to participation in oral presentations), in order to support more concretely the work of PhD students. Regular monitoring of the work of the mentoring committees, so that the views expressed and the advice given are targeted at specific aspects of improving doctoral students' research.
22.	CPI	B.2.1.5.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
23.	CPI	B.3.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	The recommendation from the previous evaluation, which called for verification of scientific publications by PhD supervisors before publication, remains valid. It would also be desirable to have a more thorough evaluation of the way in which doctoral students are guided in the drafting of these papers in order to avoid publishing articles that are mere compilations or that repeat general and well-known information, without adding anything new.
24.	PI *	B.3.1.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Analyse the reasons why doctoral students participate only to a small extent with presentations at international scientific events (at home and abroad) and draw up a plan of measures to increase this participation, so that within 2 years and 6 months the number of presentations at international scientific events is at least equal to the number of graduates
25.	PI *	B.3.2.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
26.	PI *	B.3.2.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
27.	PI	C.1.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Develop SDT's international relations through measures to increase the number of doctoral students participating in mobilities. Improving information on the possibilities of

No.	Type of indicator (PI, PI *, CPI)	Performance indicator	Judgment	Recommendations
				international mobility and funding of them, as desired by doctoral students.
28.	PI *	C.1.1.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Establish more detailed and concrete measures to improve academic processes and check how they have been implemented and the results achieved, including comparing the results of surveys among doctoral students from one year to the next.
29.	CPI	C.2.1.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
30.	PI	C.2.2.1.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Requesting the extension of access for PhD students and teaching staff to other databases relevant to the field of Theology, such as: ATLA, CEEOL, EBSCO or JSTOR. Keeping on the Library page only those links to academic databases to which users actually have access.
31.	PI	C.2.2.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
32.	PI	C.2.2.3.	<i>fulfilled</i>	
33.	PI *	C.3.1.1.	<i>partially fulfilled</i>	Develop SDT's international relations through measures to increase the number of doctoral students participating in mobilities. Improving information on the possibilities of international mobility and funding of them, as desired by doctoral students.
34.	PI	C.3.1.2.	<i>fulfilled</i>	Resumption of the series of guest lectures from other countries; consider the possibility of inviting international experts to lecture at PPBSUA. Organise international cotutelle PhDs in the future.
35.	PI	C.3.1.3.	<i>partially fulfilled</i>	Inviting more international experts to the doctoral thesis supervision and defense commissions. Participation in educational fairs with the specific presentation of the offer of doctoral studies in theology at the UOC, respectively promotion of this offer on international websites.



VI. Conclusions and general recommendations

The new managerial team of the Doctoral School of Theology has made efforts to increase the quality of education, with several positive developments since the previous evaluation.

Thus, in 2021, two indicators were found to be not fulfilled (A 131 and A 133*) and 11 other indicators were partially fulfilled (of which 2 critical and 5 with an asterisk). Compared to this situation, a significant improvement was noted in the current assessment. The two indicators that were not fulfilled are now partially fulfilled, and of those partially fulfilled in 2021 there are now only 3 more with this rating, none of which are critical).

There has therefore been an improvement in the situation of grants obtained, non-governmental funding for doctoral students, the payment of their expenses, compliance with CNATDCU standards by doctoral supervisors, the proportion of PhD holders among them, the number of concomitantly supervised doctoral students and the international visibility of professors, with publications in important journals and other relevant achievements. The ratio of PhD students to members of the supervisory committees was also resolved, as well as the number of presentations per year to which referees from other HEIs were invited to the same PhD supervisor.

In general, the positive aspects of the SDT's work relate to the existing regulations (even if they need to be improved), the availability of computer software useful in administrative processes and in checking the similarity of works, the availability of human resources with sufficient experience. Statistics on applicants and graduates are within the limits required by quality standards.

Quality assurance mechanisms are in place, but it would be desirable to put more emphasis on the implementation of the measures proposed by the quality assessments and on the verification of the results thus obtained. Closer collaboration of the SDT with the CEAC-UOC as well as with other central bodies of the University would be very useful in this respect.

Efforts for improvement should be undertaken, on a number of levels. One of these is the institutional relationship between the UOC and the Archbishopric of Tomis, so that it becomes one of collaboration at all levels, recognising the competences and limitations of both parties. Also, more insistence on the verification of the originality and academic quality of doctoral theses and doctoral students' publications, as some of them leave much to be desired in this respect.

In order for doctoral students to acquire research skills, it would be very useful to involve them much more in the research work of SDT and FT, through their research centres and by involving them in grant-funded projects. Seeking solutions for doctoral studentships, other funding and grants would address their concerns in this regard, as expressed during the meeting and through the applied questionnaire.

The international collaborations started could be developed much further, based on the availability of different Black Sea Universities with which it is already desired to start joint projects.

The SDT has proven, since the previous evaluation and so far, that it has the capacity to rapidly improve educational processes, which shows that it will be able to do so in the future. In this respect, however, it is useful first of all to recognise that there are some aspects that need to be improved; from discussions with teaching staff it emerged that in some cases there is a tendency to deny the problems or to look elsewhere for culprits (e.g. the rejection of some theses at the CNATDCU explained by the personal hostility of colleagues at other universities). In order to gain an objective view on such challenges, it is very useful to have consultations with competent people outside the SDT (e.g. UOC management) and to examine compliance with official quality standards and various legal norms.



In conclusion, the present evaluation found no indicators not fulfilled, but only seven indicators partially fulfilled, of which none critical and 2 with an asterisk. Therefore, the commission proposes the decision of of the Doctoral Degree in Theology at "Ovidius" University of Constanta.

Date:

Assoc. Prof. Dr Andrian Aleksandrov

VII. Annexes

1. *The detailed schedule of the evaluation visit.*
2. *Summary of student responses to the questionnaire*

The doctoral student evaluator, Bogdan-Marius Negrea, applied a questionnaire to the doctoral students, the results of which can be accessed using the link below:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1asDal6Ylt3W6fYJDxK3Ldre1BmQJsJHRt18O-mzqTRk/viewanalytics>

Twenty-nine doctoral students responded, i.e. about 60% of the total number of the students. The answers have been integrated, where appropriate, in this report, under the corresponding indicators.

3. *PhD supervisors' answers to the questionnaire*

The Commission requested an anonymous questionnaire from the PhD supervisors, with questions aimed at a SWOT analysis on their part. Seven out of eight responded and the answers were integrated into the report where appropriate. The questions and answers are reproduced in full below:

Opinion poll for PhD supervisors in Theology at Ovidius University (26-28 June 2023)

In your opinion, what does the Doctoral School of Theology of Ovidius University excel in?

- *"A strategic aspect of the school is the dynamics through which it has mobilized procedurally and scientifically in aligning itself with the constantly innovating requirements of legislation in the field of doctoral schools. Framework documents have been developed: regulations, methodologies, procedures. Funds have been created to support the scientific research of doctoral students, financial support for doctoral students and their coordinators to facilitate participation in conferences. Various international partnerships and collaborations in ecumenical, interreligious, intercultural and interdisciplinary fields have been thought of and even implemented, with the aim of producing doctoral works that support the formation of a thought conducive to dialogue and the acquisition of an ecumenical and dialogical awareness, highlighting the points of convergence and the common treasure. Many coordinators support the publication of doctoral students' articles in highly rated publishers to stimulate the scientific growth of the articles."*
- *"Through diverse research activities, with inter- and multidisciplinary content and experience in all sectors of activity"*
- *"Accumulated experience."*
- *"Experienced PhD supervisors, passionate and eager PhD students."*

- *"At the level of the teaching staff of the Doctoral School there are teachers with double specialization, e.g. theology-law, theology-history, theology-music, theology-philosophy, more precisely 6 out of 8 supervisors have double specialization. We believe that this aspect is not to be neglected and contributes to the quality of education."*
- *"The Doctoral School of Theology of Ovidius University of Constanta excels by the experience gained and the activities carried out as well as by the potential represented by its advantageous position on the shores of the Black Sea, in the eastern part of the European Union, an important space-point for the development of relations and projects with academic institutions and economic partners from the countries bordering the Black Sea, as well as from Asia and the Middle East. In this regard, we can highlight the fruitful collaborations with the Georgian National Academy of Sciences, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University (Georgia), Saint Tbel Abuserisdze Teaching University (Georgia) which have led to the organization of several international symposia and the publication of their volumes in international languages".*
- *"The doctoral school is staffed by competent teaching staff as well as doctoral students who are open to research at this level."*

What is the biggest problem at your doctoral school and how could it be solved?

- *"Insufficient funds to stimulate PhD students in various activities and research projects. In the near future postdoctoral and doctoral research grants will be created with the Archbishopric. Special attention in the preparation of doctoral theses. Need for uniformity of anti-plagiarism programs between doctoral schools and CNATDCU."*
- *"Personally, I am not aware of any problems in our Doctoral School."*
- *"Financial resources: places without fees and with scholarships for PhD students."*
- *"Low number of scholarships and fee-free places. Acquisition of funds from the private sector."*
- *"Financial resources allocated by the University are low compared to the real needs of PhD students. In this respect the management of the Doctoral School is making efforts to obtain the necessary research grants from the private sector."*
- *"The biggest problem at the Doctoral School of Theology of Ovidius University of Constanta is the old age of a significant part of the PhD supervisors. However, this is about to be remedied by the affiliation of new supervisors, younger and with a higher international visibility, as well as more experience in running projects or grants. In the last year the ratio of tenured and retired leaders has been remedied and there are already new researchers in the Faculty of Theology in Constanta in the process of habilitation or on the verge of submitting their application for habilitation. The newly formed team has made significant progress towards a more competitive use of the material resources available to the school, has stepped up the organisation of scientific activities that provide opportunities for doctoral students to increase their value and visibility nationally and internationally, and is committed to bringing the material base up to optimal standards."*
- *"Scholarships are insufficient and there are too few free places."*

What factors outside the doctoral school could help its future development?

- *"Attract resources, mainly financial, from economic agents, to support PhD students in improving the quality of scientific research. Partnership with the Eparchy in establishing topics for doctoral theses that meet the requirements of the area. Possibility for the Ministry of Research to support in funding also projects with interdisciplinary theological and religious topics without rejecting them as confessional. Improvement of the legal and procedural framework between doctoral*

schools and the CNATDCU regarding the double evaluation of theses in terms of scientific quality."

- *"Adequate funding for both PhD students and teaching staff."*
- *"Possible funding."*
- *"Involvement of the Archbishopric of Tomis in funding a grant together with the Doctoral School of Theology and offering a number of scholarships for PhD students."*
- *"Strengthening a group of researchers within the School to write research and development projects, so as to increase the financial resources of the School and thus support the scientific publications of doctoral students."*
- *"The strategic position of the doctoral school, the team of active and empowering researchers, the new leadership of the municipality and the Ovidius University of Constanta with a broader vision and able to attract investors and funding based on writing economically competitive projects are factors that guarantee an increase in the quality standards of the School of Theology here. Already the University's management has demonstrated excellence in project competitions, with the UOC placing first in the Dual PNRR project competition, giving it funding of more than €20 million for teaching, accommodation and canteen space on campus. Attracting foreign doctoral students interested in researching Dobrogea as an area with archaeological resources still insufficiently highlighted and a secular environment of peaceful cohesion of ethnic minorities will contribute to strengthening relations with other academic institutions in the EU, Minor Asia and the Middle East. Given the increasingly visible trend of excluding the Church from the public sphere and restricting or even conditioning it in its own private sphere through competing legislation, we believe that the presence of as many state institutions with a religious hue as possible is a service to the Church, helping to bring it out of the forced isolation imposed on it by the new anti-Christian and atheistic tendencies. Collaboration with other Doctoral Schools within the Romanian Patriarchate for more sustainable exchanges and partnerships, in the Christian spirit of mutual support through common ideas, projects and partnerships will be not only a future option for all Doctoral Schools in the field of Theology, but an imperative for their survival and increased impact in society."*
- *"Possible funding."*

What external factors (such as those in the question above) could create difficulties for your doctoral school in the future?

- *"Economic factors."*
- *"Unfair and unorthodox competition between some doctoral schools resulting in negative subjective evaluations or the use of biased views in the media on some individuals in the doctoral school, which become subjective benchmarks in the evaluation of theses."*
- *"Demographic and economic factors."*
- *"Demographic and economic factors"*
- *"Population decline may affect both the work of the Faculty of Theology and the Doctoral School in the long term."*
- *"The most aggravating external factors for the effective functioning of the Doctoral School are those of a political and economic nature, in the conditions of an international conflagration hovering over this geographical area exposed to the expansionist tendencies of the Russian Federation. Other factors are those at national level, where there is an increasing tendency towards centralisation of power, which tends in the long term to undermine the power of expression of local autonomy in making decisions and promoting their own vision. Thus, instead*



of sustaining a symphonic polyphony in the church world and in Orthodox Christian religious education, in the unifying Spirit of the Gospel that takes into account the maintenance of identity, there can be drifts towards the Western tendency of deaf monologue from a central forum acting in a coercive and dictatorial way."

Please let us know what you think is useful for us to have a more accurate opinion about the quality of education in your doctoral school:

- *"The Doctoral School has already entered a major upward trend in promoting the quality of education, already outlining various educational policies, which together with the above will lead to the establishment of an integrated strategy."*
- *"From the teaching experience in this Doctoral School, I consider that a specificity of the quality of education provided by the teaching staff is their dedication to the training of doctoral students and the affirmation of the prestige of Romanian education beyond the borders of the country. Personally, I have former PhD students who are researchers and teaching staff in countries such as Romania, Georgia, Moldova and Belgium."*
- *"I haven't finalised my opinion yet, as I don't have much seniority in SDT."*
- *"I believe that the Theological Doctoral School can develop in the future, as there are teaching staff with potential in the Faculty of Theology. On 28-29 May 2023, the first conference of the Doctoral School of Theology was held, attended by 20 PhDs from our school and 16 PhDs from other doctoral schools together with 7 professors (5 doctoral schools). The conference continued the series of conferences in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2022."*
- *"The quality of education in the School of Theology of IOSUD Ovidius is on a good path, the efforts made in the last 2 years can be seen in all educational aspects and have been constantly improved."*
- *"The Doctoral School of Theology in Constanta has known in its history a great attraction for doctoral students through the generous offer of specialization of doctoral supervisors, in various areas of research, which has ensured a constant enrolment, even if over time the number of doctoral students has experienced a decrease similar to the national level, the main reason being the demographic decline. This attractiveness was based on the good communication with the PhD students shown by the PhD supervisors and, in particular, by the Tomis archbishop, in his double capacity as Archbishop and PhD supervisor, respectively Director of the Doctoral School during a certain period of time."*
- *"Also, the enrolled PhD students came from different regions of the country or from the Diaspora, which confirms the collegial research environment that is promoted in this educational institution located in a geographical area recognized worldwide for the uniqueness of the good co-existence of different ethnicities and confessions."*
- *"There is potential for development in the doctoral school in the future."*

4. Scanned documents